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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KIRKUK 000017

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SUBJECT: (SBU) PUK FACILITATES ARAB DEPARTURE FROM KIRKUK

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CLASSIFIED BY: BELL, RC, RC, USDOS.

REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

(U) Classified by Regional Coordinator Richard Bell for reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY: Dr. Farhad Omar works in a new PUK-funded group assisting Arabization Arabs who want to return voluntarily to southern Iraq. He and a Kurdish member of the Kirkuk provincial council told DRC and IPAQ on January 25 that "Kurdistan Unity and Brotherhood (KUB)" assists prospective returnees with the process of changing their civil registration from Kirkuk to their province of origin. KUB provides returnees with some small financial assistance but does not buy their houses or pay moving costs. KUB works through word-of-mouth and local representatives of Sistani's office, SCIRI and some Shiite Arab tribal leaders in Kirkuk. Farhad, an ethnic Kurd from Kirkuk, is a member of the Kurdistan Communist Party. END INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY.

(SBU) PUK-FUNDED GROUP ASSISTS ARABS TO LEAVE

¶2. (C) Dr. Farhad said he was a member of Kirkuk Unity and Brotherhood (KUB), a group formed in the fall by Kurds to help repatriate Arabization Arabs to southern Iraq. Concerning this group, he said:

-- KUB has 12 staff and rents a building in Kirkuk for \$500 a month. To help cover its costs, KUB has received about \$4,500 from the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK) in December-January of which about \$1,500 has been spent defraying some costs of returnees. The KUB gets no support from the PUK's rival, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP).

-- The first group of Arabization Arabs whose repatriation was assisted by KUB left in December 2005. Another 150 families will depart soon, of whom over 30 have already completed all their paperwork; this will raise the total to about 1,000 individuals, at an average of 4-5 people per family.

-- The December group's members were mostly Shiite Arabs with a sprinkling of Sunnis from three neighborhoods of Kirkuk city in particular, Zayran, Abdulrahman and Wasiti. (NOTE: These districts are in the southern part of Kirkuk city. END NOTE.) Most of the returnees were from Thi Qar and Qadisiyah provinces. All have completed the process of changing their civil registration from Kirkuk to their former provinces.

-- KUB did not defray their moving costs or buy their homes. KUB did provide them financial assistance to travel to their original districts to re-register. Once re-registered, they then sold their homes and moved back. A few from the December group are still in the process of moving out. Most of these Arabization Arabs were forcibly placed in Kirkuk by Saddam.

-- Three Shiite religious parties have set up committees to assist KUB in this process. They are Sistani's group, Hakim's Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq (SCIRI) and a group of Shiite Arab tribal leaders. KUB's interlocutor with the Sistani group is Sheikh Abbas, with SCIRI it is Saa'dun Abid Ja'ri and with the Council of Independent Iraqi Tribes it is Jabar Haddam. Abbas, Ja'ri and Haddam all live in Kirkuk.

-- KUB's "advertising" is done by word-of-mouth, public meetings and through KUB's interlocutors in the Arabization Arab community. About a thousand heads of household have met with KUB already and the numbers are growing. Over 20 people came to see them January 25. KUB will expand its outreach by holding conferences and meetings with potential returnees.

-- Once someone has agreed to leave, KUB will take them to the Kirkuk civil registration office to verify that they are registered as residing in Kirkuk and verify their place of origin. KUB does much of the administrative legwork in Kirkuk for potential returnees and if necessary assists them financially to travel to southern Iraq to locate a new home and facilitate the re-registration process. The Kirkuk civil registration office confirms via mail with the civil registration office in their original home area their new place of registration, a new ID card is issued and their Kirkuk ID card is cancelled. The original province usually has no problem with allowing them to return. The prospective returnee then sells his home to whomever and moves back. KUB does not pay moving or temporary housing costs.

-- KUB also places the returnee's name on a list for possible future compensation. Some have suggested that compensation be

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in the form of apartments in the south so that the returnees do not use the money to splurge and then be without housing. (COMMENT: This would also ensure their departure from Kurdish areas. END COMMENT.)

-- KUB is focusing part of its efforts on the Sunni Arabization Arabs of Kirkuk (most Arabization Arabs are Shiites), as this small group is being used by Sunni Arab parties to stake an Arab claim to Kirkuk (i.e., Sunni parties are encouraging Arabs to stay in Kirkuk).

-- The Shiite religious parties in Kirkuk also have an office that provides assistance to Shiite Arabs wishing to return to the south, but this office is not very active.

13. (C) Our interlocutors said Sadrists in Baghdad were trying to revive the old Arabization policy by hiring only Arabs from outside Kirkuk for various ministries and parastatals in Kirkuk. The Kirkuk Provincial Council, with strong support from the highest levels of the KDP and PUK, "raised hell" and the Prime Minister put a stop to this practice at the beginning of the new year. Some 300 new employees of the Northern Oil Company, 200 of the Health Ministry and a few other ministries who arrived in this manner are still in Kirkuk. The PM agreed that the PC had the right to decide who should be hired for state and parastatal jobs in Kirkuk.

(U) COMMENT

14. (C) This is the first we have heard of this program; Dr. Farhad's description of its operation may or may not be accurate. However, it seems to be a low-cost Kurdish effort to accelerate Kurdification that lets homebuyers pay the big, up-front costs for the returnees' houses while KUB only has to

pay minor costs associated with civil-registration changes and house-hunting trips. We will try to meet with some of KUB's beneficiaries, to get a clearer sense of their motives for leaving Kirkuk. The Kurds' motive for helping them is transparent: with an eye on the referendum that is to be held before end 2007, the Kurds know that each Arab family that leaves decreases the number of potential votes against incorporating Kirkuk into Kurdistan.

BELL